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UNCLAS OTTAWA 003101

SIPDIS

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PARIS PASS UNESCO; STATE PASS USTR

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DIPLOMATIC NOTE REGARDING UNESCO CULTURAL
DIVERSITY IMPASSE

REF: SECSTATE 190825

1. (SBU) Post delivered reftel diplomatic note by fax on receipt Saturday, October 15. The Ambassador followed up with Jonanthan Fried, senior official at the Privy council Office. Fried said that he had just spoken to Faryar Shirzad at the NSC on the same subject but that the GOC remains convinced that the language in the Convention does not affect Canada's WTO commitments, and that he had offered to get International Trade Canada's lawyers to speak to our lawyers on the subject. (Fried also offered some other points of contact on the trade side, which Post passed on to the U.S. Mission to UNESCO.) He continued to hold to that line during follow-up contacts with the Ambassador and the DCM Saturday and Sunday, observing that "we in the Government of Canada do not want this treaty to weaken our trade commitments". We note, however, that the latest press release from Canadian Heritage Minister Frulla states that "the Convention will be on an equal footing with other international treaties."

2. (SBU) Comment: The current minority government is clearly giving Minister Frulla a free hand on this issue because of its political value in Quebec, where the Liberal Party is on a shaky footing. However, it appeals to other groups in Canada as well. Canada's stance reflects a longstanding political culture that continues to support regulation of content even on private subscriber-based audiovisual services such as satellite radio, to say nothing of onerous language rules within Quebec. End comment.

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